DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 597 EA 021 376

AUTHOR Sweeney, James
TITLE The Supervisory Conference--Being the Best You Can Be.
INSTITUTION National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Va.
PUB DATE Oct 89
NOTE 14p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091 ($1.50; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT The Practitioner; v16 n1 Oct 1989

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Administrators; *Communication Skills; *Conferences; Elementary Secondary Education; *Supervision; *Teacher Supervision
IDENTIFIERS *Supervisory Conferences

ABSTRACT

The supervisory conference presents an opportunity to stimulate growth and to improve performance despite the threat, in some cases, to self-esteem and job security. This document identifies the conflicting but challenging purposes of supervisory conferences and presents suggestions for setting up the supervisory conference through a preconference. (10 references) (KM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED311597

THE PRACTITIONER

nassp

A Newsletter for the On-Line Administrator

Vol. XVI, No.1 (ISSN 0192-6160) October 1989

The Supervisory Conference — Being the Best You Can Be

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Koerner

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA021376

THE PRACTITIONER

nassp

A Newsletter for the On-Line Administrator

Vol. XVI, No.1 (ISSN 0192-6160) October 1989

The Supervisory Conference — Being the Best You Can Be

The supervisory conference may be the administrator's single most important activity. The late Richard Voso, who was a principal in Brevard, North Carolina, provided a principal view: "We earn the right to the title, 'principal', or 'first teacher', in the supervisory conference, for it is in the supervisory conference that we have the best chance to improve instruction and develop a community of learners."

Joe Deerdorf, principal of Delaware Technical High School, agrees and adds "Conducting a supervisory conference is the most challenging thing I do daily, for it's through this conference that I have the greatest opportunity to improve instruction."

Whether an administrator is a principal, central office supervisor, or superintendent, the supervisory conference presents a crucial challenge—the opportunity to stimulate growth and improve performance despite, in some cases, the threat to self-esteem and job security.

This *Practitioner* begins by identifying the conflicting but challenging purposes of supervisory conferences and then presents suggestions for setting up the supervisory conference through a pre-conference. Important research findings are provided to guide practice.

Next, since there are no simple recipes for meeting the complex challenges posed by conducting supervisory conferences, Key Principles, Critical Strategies, a Checklist, and a Check-Up offer guidance for making supervisory conferences the best they can be.

Purpose of the Supervisory Conference

It is extremely important to consider why the supervisory conference is held before thinking about what to do or how to do it. Whether the conference is of a formative or summative nature, it should do the following:

1. Enhance the relationship between supervisor and employee.
2. Provide the employee with feedback about performance as it relates to productivity in the classroom, school, or organization.
3. Stimulate exploration of alternative strategies, behaviors, or conditions for improving performance.
4. Stimulate the employee to analyze her or his behavior and compare it with desired performance.
5. Promote independent, reflective thinking and autonomy.
6. Encourage personal growth and the development of skills.
7. Provide the supervisor with a better understanding of the employee's work situation.

The Pre-Conference

The pre-conference can be formal (scheduled) or informal. While a new teacher or group of teachers experiencing problems often requires more time and help, suggesting a few minutes for an informal con-

EA 021 376

ference or arranging for the new teacher to observe a veteran teacher may be the best a busy supervisor can do. This brief time for interaction prior to lesson observation is helpful to the supervisor and sets the tone with a teacher for the supervisory conference. A recent study on pre-conferencing (Blackbourn, Hare, and Kritsonis, 1989) reported that teachers enter the pre-conference with favorable attitudes toward the person conducting the conference and toward the evaluation procedure.

Supervisors also see the pre-conference in a positive light. Some of the benefits reported by supervisors include the following:

- Promotes trust and the relationship between supervisor/teacher.
- Clarifies the lesson objectives and identifies the teaching/learning activities that will be utilized to reach those objectives.
- Clarifies the context of the lesson; i.e., whether the lesson is a review or new material and what has occurred prior to and will occur after the lesson.
- Provides information about the class and individual students in the class.
- Identifies areas in which the teacher would like feedback.
- Clarifies the ground rules; i.e., time, seat location, conduct of the post-conference, etc.

Most practitioners report that a pre-conference form helps the pre-conference flow more easily and is helpful in the observation. Below is a typical pre-conference form.

Teacher _____ Date _____
Observer _____ Time _____

1. Where are you in the lesson? Is this new teaching or review?
2. What do you want the students to know or be able to do as a result of the lesson?
3. What teaching/learning activities will take place?
4. How will you check to see if students are learning?
5. How could you describe the students in your class? Are there are any special students you want me to observe?
6. Is there anything in particular that you want me to provide feedback on?
7. What else can you tell me that would be helpful in the lesson observation?

Research—Key Findings

Research provides important insights into what works best in supervisory conferences. It also highlights the situational nature of the activity. The following research findings have important implications for supervisors:

- Employee Participation: The more an employee participates in an appraisal, the more the employee is satisfied with the appraisal process and the person who conducted it, and the more likely performance improvement goals will be accepted and met (Latham and Yukl, 1975; Nemeroff and Wexley, 1977).

- Helpful, Supportive Supervisors: Employee acceptance of an appraisal and satisfaction with the supervisor increases to the extent that the supervisor is helpful and supportive (Kay, Meyer, and French, 1965; Nemeroff and Wexley, 1977).

- Specific Goals: Setting specific goals dramatically improves employee performance. In fact, specific goals can result in up to twice as much improvement in employee performance as a discussion of general goals (Latham and Yukl, 1975).

- Feedback: Perceptions of feedback are influenced by (1) the source of the feedback—the supervisor must be credible and trustworthy; (2) nature of the feedback—negative feedback is often misperceived or not accepted; (3) frequency of the feedback—more frequent feedback works best if it is positive, but it can be seen as harassment if negative; and (4) perceptions of feedback—perceptions are influenced by the needs of the employee (Ilgin, Fisher, and Taylor, 1979).

- Criticism: Too much criticism results in defensive reactions by employees which, in turn, leads to little performance improvement on their part (Kay, Meyer, and French, 1965). Their defensiveness can be explained by the desire to "look good" in their bosses' eyes. Defensiveness can take various forms such as blaming others for their inadequacies, minimizing the importance of the appraisal process, demeaning the supervisor and/or the appraisal forms, and insincerely agreeing to change their ways. Criticism threatens employees' self-esteem because it provides specific

and behaviorally-oriented negative feedback. The more the supervisor focuses on the personality of the employee rather than on observed behaviors, the less the employee will be motivated to improve her or his performance (Cascio, 1982).

Key Principle: Analyze Performance, Determine Focus

To fail to plan is to plan to fail. Since the supervisory conference is a discussion of performance, the first and most important step in the process is to analyze performance. It is critically important to collect and record data while observing a lesson. These data provide the basis for examining patterns of behavior, providing specific feedback, and making decisions about performance.

The most important decision involves identifying the performance areas to discuss. Supervisors should answer three questions in determining the areas of focus in the conference.

1. What techniques or strategies do I want to reinforce, encourage growth in, or stimulate the other person to think about? Example: Questioning techniques might be the focus of the conference.
2. What frequent behavior or strategy had the greatest impact on productivity in the classroom or other worksite? Example: Questioning techniques might be identified because of the frequent use of questions during the lesson.
3. What behavior or strategy had the greatest impact on teaching/learning behaviors? Example: Involving students helps to influence student behavior and eliminate classroom management problems. It may be wise to focus on student involvement, not classroom management.

Tim Westerberg, principal in Littleton, Colorado, provides direction for those planning teacher post-observation conferences. He blocks out time following the observation and uses a checklist.

Tim Westerberg, Principal
Littleton High School
199 E. Littleton Blvd.
Littleton, Colo. 80121

Supervisor Strategy	Activity
✓ Summarize lesson	Label, organize, analyze patterns of behavior, and make decisions about content, methods, sequence, time, and teaching/learning behaviors.
✓ Identify building blocks	Identify areas to reinforce that reflect the most important teacher strategies or activities that enhance student learning.
✓ Identify growth targets	Identify targets for growth that reflect the most important teacher strategies with potential for enhancing student learning. These are not necessarily weaknesses; they often reflect areas important because of their frequency, impact on learning, or impact on other teaching/learning behavior.
✓ Select specific data/ provide notation	Select data and provide notations for feedback, analysis of performance, and identification of building blocks and growth targets.
✓ Complete the conference planning guide	This one-page guide can be obtained (at no cost) from James Sweeney, N229C Lagomarcino Hall, Iowa State Univ., Ames, Iowa 50011.

A Typical Supervisory Conference Structure

A supervisory conference is like any well-designed adult learning activity; it has a good beginning or set, a productive "give and take" discussion, and a good close. Tom Wicks, assistant professor at Kansas State University, visualizes how the conference should unfold and identifies the goals he wants to accomplish. Below are the seven elements that comprise his vision.

Elements	Goals
Social Talk	Set the person at ease and promote receptivity
Stage Setting	Promote readiness and provide structure and focus
Involvement	Gather information and promote interest and commitment
Check for Understanding	Determine clarity of communication and understanding of concept
Check for Agreement	Determine receptivity to change or how to proceed
Check for Commitment	Determine commitment to change and receptivity to coaching
Closure	Enhance relationships/ agree on key points and schedule follow-up

Key Principle: Plan the Approach

No two conferences are alike. One of the most important decisions facing an administrator preparing for a conference revolves around what approach to use. Issues include whether to be direct or indirect and how to communicate most effectively and promote receptivity. Maureen Zolubos, principal in Westborough, Massachusetts, weighs four factors in deciding on the approach to use. Following are the questions she asks herself and some key points she considers.

Maureen Zolubos, Principal
Westborough High School
90 West Main St.
Westborough, Mass.
01581

1. What is my purpose?

The supervisor must be very clear about the decision level to employ in discussing performance. Below are the four decision levels and a guide to their use.

Decision	Level Guidelines
Delegate	Leave the decision to change up to the other person. Typically utilized with a highly skilled, analytical, knowledgeable employee.
Suggest	Suggest possible change, but leave the decision up to the employee. Usually employed where performance is effective but alternative strategies might be helpful and productive.
Recommend	Clearly communicate the need to change or improve behavior or techniques. Need for change is stronger, and the employee should change behavior or technique.
Direct	Clearly communicate that change must be made as well as the timelines for change. Typically employed where performance is below the district standards.

2. What are the needs and communication or behavior style of the other person?

Replace the golden rule with the platinum rule–Do unto others as they would have you do unto them. A careful examination of the characteristics of the other

person using the continuum below helps to determine the approach to use in the conference.

LOW TRUST	HIGH TRUST
UNRECEPTIVE	RECEPTIVE
INDIRECT	DIRECT
QUIET	TALKATIVE
LOW KNOWLEDGE	HIGH KNOWLEDGE

3. What are the situational elements to consider?

Situational factors that should be considered in planning the approach include:

- Past conferences
- Recent incidents or events in the work environment
- External events.

4. What is my communication/behavioral style, and what strengths do I bring to the conference?

Rule 1 in conducting a conference is: "Be yourself." Rule 2 is: "Adjust your behavior to meet other's communication/behavior needs." Face this dichotomy by playing to your strengths and adjusting to your comfort point. Below are three questions to ask in assessing your style:

- What behaviors do I bring to the conference that promote success?
- Is my primary communication style direct or indirect?
- Do I need to modify my basic behavior or communication style to promote success in this conference?

Key Principle: Promote a Positive Conference Climate

Climate represents the feel or atmosphere that is present in the conference. It influences the receptivity of the teacher and the opportunity for growth. Diana Bourisaw, principal in Liberty, Missouri, uses the checklist and reminders below to guide her in promoting a positive conference climate.

Diana Bourisaw, Principal
Liberty Middle School
Withers Rd.
Liberty, Mo. 64068

Climate Check	Reminder
✓ Best Location	Choose a site where you and the teacher feel most comfortable and will not be disturbed.
✓ No Interruptions	Ensure that the door is closed and the secretary is instructed to hold all calls unless an emergency arises.
✓ Remove Desk as Barrier	To promote collegiality, use informal seating or place both chairs on the same side of desk or table.
✓ Total Attention	Clear the desk, arrange the environment to obviate distractions, and give the other person your total attention.
✓ Eye Contact	Promote trust, sincerity, and listening by not looking away when communicating or listening. Be careful not to stare or overreact since some people respond negatively to this kind of eye contact.
✓ Smile	Remember to project a pleasant image. Frowning or scowling creates a negative, self-fulfilling prophecy. Communicate "I care."
✓ Body Lean	Leaning back in a formal conference tends to communicate nonchalance, power, or even arrogance. A slight forward lean sends an "I care" message and promotes listening.
✓ Listen	Listening is the most sincere form of flattery since it communicates that the other person is important. Work hard not to interrupt.

Key Principle: Set the Stage

A conference is like a lesson; the manner in which the stage is set has a dramatic effect on learning. Sue Edwards, personnel director in the Anne Arundel School District, Maryland, maintains that what and how she communicates at the very outset of the conference contributes most significantly to its outcome. She uses a standard approach to share her expectations and invite questions.

Sue Edwards,
Director of Personnel
Anne Arundel County
Public Schools
2644 Rieva Rd.
Annapolis, Md. 20401

1. Provide a statement of purpose. The other person should know that the purpose of the conference is to discuss performance and provide feedback. This discussion and feedback will prove helpful in identifying or reinforcing what makes a difference. It is also important that he or she understand that in most conferences, a main objective is to identify at least one area for growth.
2. Clarify the ground rules. The supervisor should outline how the conference will proceed, including the length, the use of data, and other details. Assure the other person that there will be no interruptions and promote active participation in the discussion.
3. Solicit the other's expectations. It is important to send a message that the conference is designed to meet the other's needs as well as those of the organization. Offer to discuss any concern the other person may have about the job performance evaluation or supervisory process.

Critical Strategy: Involve the Other Person

Research indicates that people are much more likely to commit to change if they are active participants in any discussion about performance. We also know that new behavior is more likely to be sustained if a person analyzes his or her own behavior, explores alternatives, and experiences a sense of autonomy and independence in making decisions. It frequently takes considerable discussion about a lesson to lead to a specific aspect of performance. Terry Grier, superintendent of schools in Darlington, South Carolina, utilizes key questions and other techniques to involve the other person.

Terry Grier,
Superintendent
Darlington County
Public Schools
P.O. Box 493
Darlington, S.C. 29532

1. Ask questions—Questioning is one of the supervisor's basic skills. Smart questions can be used to do the following:
   - ✓ Probe for specifics, facts
   - ✓ Call forth evidence to support assumptions
   - ✓ Check for understanding
   - ✓ Reflect on performance
   - ✓ Consider and discuss alternative strategies
   - ✓ Stimulate critical thinking
   - ✓ Evaluate the appropriateness of strategies and techniques.

2. Listen and attend—Listening enables the supervisor to learn and enhances self-esteem. Silence allows the other person to proceed at his or her own pace. Attending through positive, nonverbal signals affirms the supervisor's intent to truly involve the other person. Research indicates that the following promote good listening: eye contact, body lean, non-distracting environment, and psychological attention.
3. Utilize encouraging remarks—Many employees report that they go to a supervisory conference expecting to play a passive role, to give their supervisor a good listening. Research indicates that principals typically talk more than 70 percent of the time in a supervisory conference. Research also indicates that encouraging remarks such as, "tell me more," "go on," and "that's interesting" promote involvement.
4. Use the golden moment—Silence is golden. Allow the other person time to think; send the message that he or she counts.

Critical Strategy: Check for Understanding

Good mentors and helpers check for understanding throughout the discussion. Communication in a conference is confounded by the complexity of job performance and the anxiety or defensiveness

involved in the discussion of one's own performance. Karyn Dyzacky, director of secondary education in Warwick, Rhode Island, recommends five activities to check for understanding.

Karyn Dzyacky
Director of Secondary Education
34 Warwick Lake Ave.
Warwick, R.I. 02889
Warwick Public Schools

✓ Check to determine if what you said was understood. Ask for feedback or for the other person to summarize what was said.
✓ Discuss concepts or techniques and listen very carefully to see if the concept is understood.
✓ Ask the other person to explain the benefits of a change.
✓ Ask the other person to explain how he or she might change a technique.
✓ Ask if there are questions or if clarification is needed.

Critical Strategy: Check for Agreement and Commitment

Agreement precedes change. Checking for agreement, in this sense, entails checking to see if the other person agrees with the feedback and analysis, as well as with the need to change behavior. Felicia Blacher-Rick, principal in Ames, Iowa, provides these tips.

Felicia Blacher-Rick, Principal
Abbie Sawyer Elementary School
4316 Ontario
Ames, Iowa 50010

1. Timing is everything. The supervisor must watch and listen carefully for the opportune or teachable moment.
2. Check for agreement informally by asking questions such as, "What do you think about using more small groups?"
3. Avoid discussing what you would like to see next time and discuss what he or she will do over the long haul. The former implies the employee is doing it for the supervisor; the latter that he or she is doing it because it makes a difference.
4. When the concept has been discussed, consider asking directly, "Do you agree that small group work is desirable?" or "Is that something you want to work on?"

Sweeney's Timely Tip: If you do not get agreement, it may be that you have not communicated clearly or the other person needs more time to consider the change. The options remaining, depending on the decision level, are (1) more discussion, (2) delay, or (3) issue a directive.

The Questioning Process

Every supervisor should be a specialist in the art of asking questions. Questions are the ultimate tool for promoting success in a conference. There is no better way to gather the information needed to make the complex decisions required of a supervisor. Some of the most important reasons why asking questions remains the ultimate conference strategy are:

- Helps to increase participation and enhance the trust, credibility, and rapport that are essential for positive communication and commitment.
- Enables the supervisor to check perceptions about data collected in the observation.
- Helps the supervisor to assess the receptivity of the other person.
- Helps the supervisor to identify personal needs, beliefs, and values about what the employee wants and believes works best.
- Stimulates the employee to analyze performance and explore other approaches.
- Enables the supervisor to check for understanding, agreement, and commitment.

Barbara Licklider, principal in Council Bluffs, Iowa, uses six types of questions. The question guide below helps her promote involvement and check for understanding, agreement, and commitment.

Barbara Licklider, Principal
Woodrow Wilson Junior High School
715 North 21st St.
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501

Question Guide

1. **Analysis Questions**
   Primary Purpose: To encourage examination of strategies, techniques and performance, and the possibility of change.

Other Outcomes: Participation, ownership, information giving, etc.

Application: When there is some degree of receptivity and you want to involve the teacher in a discussion of good practice and what occurred in the lesson.

Examples: "What works best in small groups?"
"Why did they get it so quickly?"
"Why do you think Tom is not attending?"

2. Fact-Finding Questions

Purpose: Obtain specific information about the situation or techniques used.

Other Outcomes: Focus discussion and validate or correct your assumptions.

Application: Use with sensitivity to obtain information required to make decisions.

Examples: "Was this a review lesson?"
"Was this a typical class?"
"Why did you begin with a joke?"

3. Attitude Questions

Purpose: To examine beliefs and values, and receptivity toward change.

Other Outcomes: Shows caring, promotes trust.

Application: When you want to know more about how the teacher is thinking and feeling.

Examples: "How do you feel about that suggestion?"
"What is your opinion?"
"Do you believe that lecture works best with these students?"

4. Checking for Understanding Questions

Purpose: To determine if the feedback, suggestions, or discussion are clear and understood.

Other Outcomes: Shows concern and provides for employee input.

Application: Use throughout the conference; the supervisor must listen.

Examples: "How would more questions be helpful?"
"Would you summarize what we've discussed?"

5. Agreement Question

Purpose: To assess whether the teacher agrees with the supervisor's feedback or analysis.

Other Outcomes: Promotes commitment and helps the supervisor decide how to proceed.

Application: Use with great sensitivity before moving toward commitment.

Examples: "Do you agree that more student involvement would be helpful?"
"Do you think more students will be involved by using small groups?"

6. Check for Commitment

Purpose: Elicit a commitment to improve performance or try a new technique.

Other Outcomes: Promote ownership and earn the right to coach.

Application: Not to be employed unless teacher has analyzed performance and is receptive to change.

Example: "Is that something you want to work on?"
"Do you want to get more students involved?"
"Do you want some feedback on that?"

Critical Strategy: Close the Conference

It is important to close on a positive and professional note. Liz Hedrick, principal in Norman, Oklahoma, generally asks the questions below and ends on a high note by expressing her appreciation for the effort and good work being done. She often praises work performance at the end of the conference.

Liz Hedrick, Principal **1919 West Boyd**
West Mid High School **Norman, Okla. 73069**

1. "As a result of our conference what will you continue to do because it makes a difference?"
2. "Summarize for me, please, what you plan to work on in the future and how you will go about it."
3. "Is there anything I can do to help you along the way?"
4. "When would you like me to give you some feedback?"
5. "I want to remind you that you make a difference. I really appreciate your . . . . Your questioning technique makes kids . . . . I also want you to know I appreciate . . . ."

Supervisory Conference Checklist

Below is a checklist to be used in planning and conducting a supervisory conference. Examine it when planning the conference and keep it as a reminder during the conference. You may want to review it following the conference to set your own growth goals.

Planning

✓ Analyze the data—be prepared to discuss performance and provide specific feedback.
✓ Identify the focus of conference, the building blocks and growth areas. Decide on the decision level (delegate, suggest, recommend, or direct).
✓ Determine the best approach to use, based on purpose and the other person.
✓ Plan for the best time, location, and environment.

Interaction

✓ Clarify the purpose of the conference.
✓ Explain the conference process—what will happen.
✓ Explore the other person's expectations for the conference.
✓ Involve the other person through questions and discussion.
✓ Encourage active participation in discussion through nods, smiles, listening, and encouraging remarks.
✓ Provide specific feedback about performance.
✓ Check for understanding of concepts and feedback.
✓ Clarify areas of confusion or misunderstanding.
✓ Enhance or maintain the self-esteem of the employee.
✓ Listen and respond with empathy if the other person appears to be discouraged.
✓ Ask for help in solving the problem.
✓ Promote a positive climate through eye contact, body lean, attentiveness, nods and smiles, and positive voice tone.
✓ Encourage the other person to identify strategies to improve performance and how and when to use them.
✓ Check for agreement by listening and/or asking questions.
✓ Check for commitment to change by listening and/or asking questions.
✓ Close by identifying key points, enhancing self-esteem, and arranging for follow-up.

The Difficult Conference—Dealing with the Unreceptive

The supervisory conference does not always proceed as planned. Asking someone to change can create anxiety and sometimes results in conflict. William Anderson, a superintendent for many years and now a visiting professor at Iowa State University, suggests

that there are key principles that must be followed in difficult conferences. He also believes that the supervisor must make good decisions in choosing from a number of strategies to determine the ones that will create a win-win situation.

Key Principles

1. Enhance or Maintain Self-Esteem. Praise by referring to effort, competence, and self-worth, and refrain from criticizing or acting defensively.
2. Listen and Respond with Empathy. Acknowledge the other person's feelings and communicate that you understand those feelings.
3. Ask for Help in Solving the Problem. Ask the other person to help develop the solution. You are more likely to be able to reach a compromise.

Key Strategies

- Shut Up and Listen. If the other person is frustrated, let him or her vent that anger or frustration; take notes and do not interrupt.
- Determine the Nature of the Problem and the Other Person's Needs. Ask questions and listen to determine what you are dealing with and the other person's feelings and needs.
- Explore Feelings. If anger or frustration is exhibited, listen for those feelings, reflect them back to the person, and explore their source.
- Behave Like a Duck. Stay cool on the surface but paddle like mad underneath. Never lose your temper; it is a professional, not a personal matter.
- Use "I" Not "You" Statements. "I" communicates what you need and takes the pressure off the other person. "You" is like pointing a finger in his or her face. Work hard to provide room for the other person to change.
- Respect Other's Rights and Require That They Respect Yours. Calmly and objectively let the other person know if he or she is infringing on your rights.
- Limit Behavior/Clarify Consequences. If the person is behaving inappropriately, be sure to communicate that the behavior is inappropriate and clarify the consequences of this behavior. Let the person know he or she may cause the conference to be terminated.
- Know When To Terminate. Behavior has consequences; terminate the conference if the other person goes beyond the limits set. Do it calmly and go about your other important business.

Supervisory Conference Check-Up

Feedback is the "Breakfast of Champions," and no one needs it more than the supervisor. A conference is a great deal like a lesson. The best way to find out how you are doing is to ask those who are on the other end of the process. Jerry Braden, principal of Key West, Florida, sometimes uses a check-up to get feedback and to modify his approach to the conference. He is very selective and uses the check-up only when he feels comfortable and believes someone will give him candid feedback.

Jerry Braden, Principal **12122 14th St.**
Key West School District **Key West, Fla. 33040**

Check-Up

I need your feedback so that I can be effective in conducting supervisory conferences. Please respond to the statements below in circling the number that reflects your assessment of my behavior in the conference. Please provide any additional comments that would be helpful. Thank you!

Key: 1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree

During the conference, my supervisor:

1. Clearly communicated the purpose of the conference.	1 2 3
2. Involved me in the discussion.	1 2 3
3. Listened well throughout the conference.	1 2 3
4. Exhibited positive non-verbals (facial expression, body lean, etc.)	1 2 3
5. Provided specific feedback about my performance.	1 2 3
6. Checked to see if feedback (or suggestions) was clear to me.	1 2 3
7. Helped me to analyze my performance.	1 2 3
8. Encouraged or allowed me to express my opinions.	1 2 3
9. Was candid with me.	1 2 3
10. Was tactful yet task-oriented in the conference.	1 2 3
11. Really appeared to be interested in my opinion.	1 2 3

12. Provided suggestions or offered to help if asked.	1	2	3
13. Helped me to consider different strategies or approaches.	1	2	3
14. Reinforced what I did well.	1	2	3
15. Focused on important aspects of teaching.	1	2	3
16. Helped me to reflect on what I do.	1	2	3
17. Gave me sufficient time.	1	2	3

Selected References

Blackbourn, R.; Hare, D.; and Kritsonis, W. "Pre-Evaluation Conference." *National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal* 1(1989).

Cascio, W.F. *Applied Psychology in Personnel Management*. Reston, Va.: Reston Publishing, 1982.

Ilgen, D.; Fisher, C.; and Taylor, M. "Consequences of Individual Feedback on Behavior in Organizations." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 5(1979).

Kay, E.; Meyer, H.H.; and French, J.P.R., Jr. "Effects of Threat in a Performance Appraisal Interview." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 49(1965).

Latham, G.P., and Yukl, G.A. "A Review of Research on the Application of Goal Setting in Organizations." *Academy of Management Journal* 18(1975).

Maier, N. *The Appraisal Interview: Three Basic Approaches*. LaJolla, Calif.: University Associates, Inc., 1976.

Nemeroff, W.F., and Wexley, K.N. "An Exploration of the Relationships Between the Performance Feedback Interview Characteristics and Interview Outcomes as Perceived by Managers and Subordinates." *Journal of Occupational Psychology* 52(1977).

Olivero, J. "Principals and Their Inservice Conferences." *Educational Leadership* 39(1982).

Sweeney, J., "The Post-Observation Conference—Planning Makes a Difference." *NASSP Bulletin*, December 1982.

Sweeney, J. and Rice, R., "A Program To Improve Principals' Conferencing Skills." *The Developer* , May 1987.

This *Practitioner* was developed by James Sweeney, professor of educational administration at Iowa State University, Ames.

The *Practitioner* is a quarterly publication of the Research Department of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091 Telephone (703) 860-0200. Annual subscription rate of $4 is included in the dues of NASSP. Individual subscriptions are not available. Additional copies may be ordered: single copies, $1.50 each; 2-10 copies, $1 each; 11-99 copies, 85 cents each; 100 or more copies, 75 cents each. Payment must accompany orders of $15 or less.

GERALD A PURDY, *President, NASSP*
SCOTT D. THOMSON, *Executive Director*
JAMES W. KEEFE, *Director of Research*

THOMAS F. KOERNER, *Editor*
CAROL BRUCE, *Associate Editor*

Other Readings About Supervision

From the NASSP Bulletin:

- "Common Sense and Candor in Supervision." By Daniel C. Cilo. February 1988.
- "Evaluating Your Evaluation Process: A Checklist for Principals." By James A. Vornberg. May 1988.
- "Focus on Communication Strengths." By June Hogue. December 1987. Dunkleberger. December 1987.

From Tips for Principals:

- "How To Conduct the Evaluation Process." By David Splitt. May 1985.
- "How To Get the Most from Teacher Observations." By Dustin A. Peters. April 1989.